Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009

Message Text

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PAGE 01 PRETOR 05963 01 OF 02 050917Z
ACTION AF-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 IO-13 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05
H-01 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01
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R 041630Z NOV 77
FM AMEMBASSY PRETORIA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9455
INFO ANCONSUL CAPETOWN L92
INFO AMCONSUL CAPE TOWN

AMEMBASSY DAR ES SALAAM
AMCONSUL DURBAN
AMEMBASSY GABORONE
AMCONSUL JOHANNESBURG
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY LUSAKA
AMEMBASSY MAPUTO
AMEMBASSY MASERU POUCH
AMEMBASSY MBABANE POUCH
USMISSION USUN NEW YORK

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 PRETORIA 5963

.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, PINS, SF
SUBJECT: BLACK REACTIONS TO THE OCTOBER 19 CRACKDOWN

1. SUMMARY: TH SCOPE OF THE SECURITY CRACKDOWN OF OCTOBER 19 TOOK MOST MEMBERS OF THE BLACK COMMUNITY BY SURPRISE. THE SUPPRESSION OF MODERATES AS WELL AS RADICAL BLACK LEADERS AND ORGANIZATIONS, TOGETHER WITH THE EARLIER DEATH OF STEVE BIKO, HAS FURTHER ACCELERATED THE RADICALIZATION OF THE BLACK COMMUNITY. WITH THE OVERT LEADERSHIP GONE, EDUCATED BLACKS EXPECT POLITICAL
CONFIDENTIAL

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PAGE 02 PRETOR 05963 01 OF 02 050917Z

ACTIVITY TO MOVE UNDERGROUND. ADULT COMMUNITY LEADERS, HOWEVER, ARE GENERALLY BEING CAUTIOUS. THERE IS THE EXPECTATION IN THE LONG TERM OF GRADUALLY INCREASING URBAN TERRORISM AND GUERRILLA ACTIVITY, BUT A NEAR-TERM UPSURGE IN VIOLENCE IS NOT FORESEEN. THE EFFICACY OF THE GOVERNMENT'S MOVE WILL BE TESTED IN LOCAL REACTION TO FORTHCOMING COMMUNITY COUNCILS ELECTIONS, RENT INCREASED,

Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009

Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009

AND IN THE FUTURE OF THE CURRENT SCHOOL BOYCOTTS. BLACK ACTIVISTS WERE BUOYED BY THE INITIAL USG REACTION, BUT DISCOURAGED BY THE SUBSEQUENT SECURITY COUNCIL VETOES. NEVERTHELESS, THE EXTENT OF INTERNATIONAL REACTION HAS REINFORCED THE GROWING FEELING AMONG BLACK ACTIVISTS THAT TIME AS WELL AS THE WORLD IS ON THEIR SIDE. END SUMMARH.

2.V THE REACTION AMONG EDUCATED SOUTH AFRICAN BLACKS TO THE DEATH IN DETENTION OF STEVE BIKO, TOGETHER WITH THE BANNINGS AND DETENTIONS OF OCTOBER 19, HAS BEEN ONE OF SHOCK AND ANGER, MIXED WITH A DETERMINATION TO CARRY ON THE STRUGGLE AGAINST APARTHEID AND THE SAG. THE BANNINGS OF THE MORE POLITICALLY ACTIVE ORGANIZATIONS, SUCH AS THE BCP WITH ITS INCREASED STATURE FOLLOWING BIKO'S DEATH, DID NOT EVOKE SURPRISE, BUT THE OVERALL SCOPE OF THE CRACKDOWN AND THE INCLUSION OF NEWSPAPERS AND SOCIAL WELFARE ORGANIZATIONS DID CATCH BLACKS AS WELL AS WHITES OFF GUARD. THE NATIONAL TREASURER OF THE ASSOCIATION FOR THE EDUCATIONAL AND CULTURAL ADVANCEMENT OF AFRICANS (ASSECA), FOR EXAMPLE, TOLD US THAT HIS ORGANIZATION WAS COMPLETELY NON-POLITICAL AND, HE HAD PRESUMED, UNCONTROVERSIAL. HE COULD NOT UNDERSTAND WHY ASSECA HAD BEEN BANNED, UNLESS IT WAS IN THE CONTEXT OF A SAG ATTEMPT TO DO AWAY WITH MOST INDEPENDENT BLACK GROUPS INVOLVED IN COMMUNITY ACTION.

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3. AS LONG AS THE GOVERNMENT PERMITTED BLACK LEADERS, MEDIA AND ORGANIZATIONS OPENLY TO ESPOUSE MAJORITY RULE, THE POSSIBILITY OF DIALOGUE HAD SEEMED TO EXIST. BUT TO MOST BLACKS, THE SECURITY CRACKDOWN SIGNIFIES THE SAG'S DETERMINATION NOT TO NEGOTIATE WITH LEGITIMATE BLACK LEADERS. THE RESULT IS A HARDENING OF ATTITUDES AND A SOMETIMES RELUCTANT SHIFT FURTHER TO THE LEFT AMONG MODERATE ELEMENTS OF THE BLACK COMMUNITY. THE BANNING OF THE WORLD, THE BLACK COMMUNITY'S ONLY NEWSPAPER OF NOTE, UNDERLINED THE FEELING THAT EVEN "MODERATE" AGITATION AGAINST SEPARATE DEVELOPMENT AND OPEN PROMOTION OF BLACK CONSCIOUSNESS AND MAJORITY RULE WAS INTERPRETED BY THE GOVERNMENT AS SUBVERSIVE. THUS, EDUCATED BLACKS, GENERALLY, EXPECT THE FOCUS OF THE STRUGGLE TO BEGIN TO SHIFT FROM ERADICA-TING APARTHEID TOWARD BRINGING DOWN THE SOUTH AFRICAN GOVERNMENT.

4. GATSHA BUTHELEZI, WHO MOST OF THE PEOPLE DETAINED HAVE CRITICIZED FOR WORKING WITHIN THE HOMELAND STRUCTURE, APPEARED TO ANTICIPATE SUCH A SHIFT IN A STATEMENT ON THE BANNINGS IN WHICH HE SAID THAT THE CONCLUSION LIKELY TO BE DRAWN BY MOST BLACKS IS THAT "THEY NEED TO RETHINK THE WHOLE SITUATION WHICH WHITES HAVE PRESENTED THEM... IN SHORT, MOST

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Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009

PEOPLE WILL CONCLUDE THAT THIS MEANS THE DIE IS CAST."

5. ANOTHERLEADING MODERATE, SAM MOTSUENYANE, CHAIRMAN OF THE NATIONAL AFRICAN FEDERATED CHAMBERS OF COMMERCE, CALLED THE CRACKDOWN "ILL-CONCEIVED, ILL-TIMED, AND ALTOGETHER NEGATIVE." HE CONTINUED: "DESPERATE ACTIONS LIKE THESE CAN ONLY EXACERBATE FRICTION AND NARROW THE CHANCES FOR PEACEFUL AND ORDERLY CHANGE IN SOUTH AFRICA." VIRTUALLY ALL BLACK LEADERS NOT CURRENTLY JAILED HAVE EXPRESSED TO US SIMILAR SENTIMENTS. WITHIN THE COMMUNITY THERE IS AN EXPECTATION IN THE LONG TERM OF GRADUALLY INCREASED URBAN TERRORISM AND GUERRILLA WAR, BUT A NEAR-TERM UPSURGE IN VIOLENCE IS NOT FORESEEN.

CONFIDENTIAL

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PAGE 04 PRETOR 05963 01 OF 02 050917Z

6. THE SUDDEN CRACKDOWN OF OCTOBER 19, COMING ON THE HEELS OF BIKO'S DEATH, APPEARS TO HAVE LEFT A SENSE OF BEWILDERMENT WITH MANY ACTIVISTS NOT KNOWING IN WHICH DIRECTION TO MOVE. ADULT COMMUNITY LEADERS ARE GENERALLY BEING CAUTIOUS IN POLITICAL ACTIVITY. A LARGE NUMBER OF PERSONS ASSOCIATED WITH THE BANNED ORGANIZATIONS ARE STILL LYING LOW FOR FEAR THAT THEY TOO COULD BE PICKED UP.

CONFIDENTIAL

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PAGE 01 PRETOR 05963 02 OF 02 050940Z
ACTION AF-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 IO-13 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05
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R 041630Z NOV 77
FM AMEMBASSY PRETORIA
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INFO AMCONSUL CAPE TOWN
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Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009

Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 PRETORIA 5963

MOST ACTIVISTS, HOWEVER, ARE DETERMINED TO KEEP UP PRESSURE ON
THE REGIME, ALTHOUGH NO SINGLE COHERENT PLAN OF ACTION HAS BEEN
FORMULATED OR IS LIKELY TO BE IN THE NEAR FUTURE.

7. OF THE MAJOR ACTIVIST GROUPS, THE HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS
WERE LEAST AFFECTED BY THE CRACKDOWN. MUCH OF THEIR
ACTIVITY WAS ALREADY CARRIED OUT UNDERGROUND, AND AS A
RESULT THE BANNINGS OF SUCH GROUPS AS THE SOWETO STUDENTS
REPRESENTATIVE COUNCIL (SSRC) AND THE SOUTH AFRICAN
STUDENTS MOVEMENT WILL PROBABLY NOT HAVE A GREAT IMPACT ON STUDENT
ACTION. THE UNDERGROUND SSRC, IN FACT, NOW REGARDS ITSELF
AS HAVING THE RESPONSIBILITY FOR FULFILLING THE GOALS IN SOWETO
OF MANY OF THE BANNED ORGANIZATIONS AND HAS IMMEDIATE PLANS TO
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ORGANIZE SOWETO RESIDENTS AGAINST COMMUNITY COUNCILS AND
RENT INCREASES (JOHANNESBURG 2817). STUDENT LEADERS IN
PRETORIA'S TOWNSHIPS TELL US THAT THEY HAVE NO IMMEDIATE PLANS,
BUT INTEND TO KEEP UP PRESSURES, ACTING ESPECAILLY AGAINST
BANTU EDUCATION AND BLACK COLLABORATORS WITH APARTHEID
INSTITUTIONS. IN THE PAST TWO WEEKS, STUDENT ACTIVISTS HAVE IN
AFCT CONTINUED EFFORTS TO PERSUADE OR COERCE THEIR FELLOW
STUDENTS TO MAINTAIN THE SCHOOL BOYCOTT.

8. GOVERNMENT ACTIONS SINCE OCTOBER 19 HAVE CONVINCED MANY URBAN
BLACKS THAT HAVING SUPPRESSED OVERT BLACK OPPOSITION VOICES
AND POLITICAL INSTITUTIONS, IT NOW INTENDS TO IMPLEMENT
A NUMBER OF POLICIES SUCH AS COMMUNITY COUNCIL ELECTIONS AND
RENT INCREASES THAT HAVE BEEN THE CENTER OF BLACK PROTEST.
MANY SEE THESE DECISIONS AS A TRIAL OF STRENGTH IN THE NEW
SITUATION AND A TEST OF THE GOVERNMENT'S BELIEF THAT THE
MAJORITY OF URBAN BLACKS WANT TO RETURN TO A "NORMAL" WORK-A-DAY
LIFE AND WELCOME THE CURTAILMENT OF AGITATION AND INTIMIDATION.
ON OCTOBER 25, THE DEPARTMENT OF INFORMATION UNDERTOOK THE FIRST
OF SEVERAL MASSIVE AIRDROPS OF PAMPHLETS OVER TOWNSHIPS IN
THE TRANSVAAL, URGING RESIDENTS TO COOPERATE WITH THE RENT INCREASES
AND
RETURN THEIR CHILDREN TO SCHOOL. THE POLICE ARE GUARDING
SCHOOLS WHERE YEAR-END EXAMINATIONS ARE CURRENTLY IN PROCESS
AND THE GOVERNMENT IS CLAIMING A LARGE TURNOUT IN SOME AREAS.

Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009

Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009

THE AMERICAN RESPONSE
9. THE BLACK COMMUNITY IS CLOSELY WATCHING THE INTERNATIONAL, AND ESPECIALLY THE AMERICAN, REACTION TO THE GOVERNMENT CRACK-DOWN. BLACKS WELCOMED THE INITIAL AMERICAN CONDEMNATION OF THE SAG, THE RECALL OF AMBASSADOR BOWDLER FOR CONSULTATIONS, AND PRESIDENT CARTER'S ANNOUNCEMENT THAT WE WOULD SUPPORT AN ARMS EMBARGO AND OTHER MEASURES. ONE JOURNALIST REPORTED "ELATION"
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 PRETOR 05963 02 OF 02 050940Z

IN SOWETO AS THE RESULT OF US MOVES, AND HOPE THAT GREATER PRESSURE WOULD BE FORTHCOMING. THE REACTION IN OTHER TOWNSHIPS WAS SIMILAR. GATSHA BUTHELEZI, WHO IN THE PAST CAUTIONED AGAINST SANCTIONS, PUBLICLY CALLED FOR STRONG INTERNATIONAL SANCTIONS AS THE ONLY WAY TO KEEP OPEN THE POSSIBILITY OF PEACEFUL CHANGE.

10. INITIAL OPTIMISM ABOUT US REACTION WAS MUTED BY THE US VETO OF THE THREE AFRICAN RESOLUTIONS IN THE SECURITY COUNCIL. MANY TOWNSHIP BLACKS HAVE LITTLE KNOWLEDGE OF THE ACTUAL LANGUAGE OR MEANING OF THE VETOED RESOLUTIONS, BUT PERCEIVE FROM THE HEADLINES THAT THE US IS RETURNING TO A POLICY THAT THEY WOULD CHARACTERIZE AS "CONDEMNATION WITHOUT ACTION." EVEN THOSE AWARE OF THE DETAILS OF THE RESOLUTIONS REGRET THE US ACTION AND DO NOT READILY ACCEPT OUR EXPLANATIONS FOR THE VETO. NEVERTHELESS, THE EXTENT OF INTERNATIONAL REACTION HAS REINFORCED THE GROWING FEELING AMONG BLACK ACTIVISTS THAT TIME AS WELL AS THE WORLD IS ON THEIR SIDE.
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Message Attributes

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22 May 2009
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